

Prayer Study #78

THE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE: A PLACE OF TESTING

I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.

Hosea 13:5

Then was Jesus led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil, and when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward hungry. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple. And saith unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not put the Lord, thy God, to the test. Again the devil taketh Him up unto an exceedingly high mountain and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. And saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Begone, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth Him and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Matthew 4:1-11

1. Jesus was led BY THE SPIRIT TO BE TESTED BY THE DEVIL.
2. Jesus, although sinless and with the Spirit without measure, had just gone through a rite that symbolized confession and repentance and Holy Spirit Baptism.
3. The tempter came at His fleshly weak point, i.e. after He had been fasting for 40 days and nights and was hungry.
4. Jesus' answer to the devil always was to quote the WORD.
5. Ultimately what the devil wants is worship. When he sees he cannot get that, he leaves.
6. The purpose of the temptation was to show Christ as sinless and to show that Christ identifies with us in our attacks from demonic forces.

Characteristics of the Wilderness in the natural

1. No water, no food
2. Hot, dry and barren
3. No rain
4. Vegetation dries up and dies.

Characteristics of the Wilderness in the spiritual

1. Usually preceded or followed by a great move of God, such as the Baptism in the Holy Spirit
2. Does not provide a shortcut
3. Place where most feel spiritual dryness
4. Place of hunger
5. Place of feeling all alone
6. Place of temptation
7. Place of great need of ministry
8. Yet it is a place where the Word tells us we must count it all joy (James 1:2) and praise Him in spite of the Spirit of Heaviness that is usually there.

Purpose of the Wilderness Experience

1. To learn dependency on God—we must have God's Word to live
2. To learn obedience
3. To learn trust
4. To show the believer that God does not desert him or her during difficult times and he or she must stay faithful.

Difference between Wilderness and the World

1. In the wilderness the focus is on the Lord and our relationship to Him. In the world the focus is on getting my needs met
2. In the wilderness we are led by the Spirit. In the World we are led by our fleshly desires.
3. In the wilderness He is often silent. In the World He speaks but we have lost our ability to hear because of our lukewarmness. *So, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.* (Revelation 3:16)

How to get out of the Wilderness

1. Speak the Word.
2. Praise the Lord.
3. Walk in Expectation.